Management Plan

Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland

Photo by Sam Wirzba

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Preamble

The management plan for Bob Creek Wildand and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland provides a long-term vision and day-to-day guidance for management of these protected areas. The management plan was developed by the Bob Creek / Black Creek Management Planning Team made up of representatives of the MD of Ranchland, grazing leaseholders, representatives of key stakeholder groups and government staff. The significant contribution of the grazing leaseholders, MD of Ranchland and stakeholder group representatives to the development of this management plan is sincerely appreciated.

The plan was completed with public input and will be reviewed and revised periodically to reflect the current thinking of Albertans on how the province's natural heritage and ranching history will be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

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1.0 Introduction

The Government of Alberta launched the Special Places program in March 1995. At the Government's request, the MD of Ranchland convened a local advisory committee to make recommendations for designating and managing a protected area in the 'Whaleback'. In response to the Local Committee's report, the Government of Alberta announced the creation of two protected areas in the Whaleback on May 11th, 1999: Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland.

In November 1999, the Minister of Environment (then responsible for Alberta's Protected Areas program) directed that a single management plan be prepared for the two protected areas. A planning team, consisting of local stakeholders, the MD of Ranchland, and provincial government staff developed the management plan based on recommendations developed by the Whaleback Special Places Local Committee.

1.1 Purpose

This plan provides direction for managing the natural heritage resource values and human uses and activities that occur within the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. The plan provides guidance to government agencies, the Bob Creek/Black Creek Advisory Committee, and users of the area. This plan represents the provincial government's direction for managing the two protected areas.

1.2 Designation

The boundaries of the two protected areas were initially established through Orders in Council in May 1999 and interim names and interim designations were applied to the two protected areas:

- Bob Creek Wildland Provincial Park
- Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Natural Area

These interim designations were considered to be the best fit between Special Places Local Committee recommendations and provincial legislation which existed at that time.

In June 2003, Heritage Rangelands – a new class of protected area – was officially established through amendments to the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act* and Black Creek Natural Area was re-established as Alberta's first Heritage Rangeland. Also in June 2003, Bob Creek Wildland Provincial Park was officially renamed "Bob Creek Wildland."

Other amendments that came into effect at that time included:

- Amendments to the *Forest Reserves Act* to change the boundary of the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve along a portion of Whaleback Ridge; the common boundary between the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland along Whaleback ridge was also changed to reflect this change in the Forest Reserve boundary

- Amendments to the *Public Lands Act* to allow for extended tenure to be offered to grazing disposition holders in the Heritage Rangeland; and
- The establishment of prohibitions and restrictions on various activities in Heritage Rangelands, including prohibiting recreational off-highway vehicle use in Heritage Rangelands.

In March 2004, The *Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act* was passed. The purpose of this Act is to allow limited recreational vehicle access through the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland – which is a unique arrangement given that recreational vehicle activity is prohibited within Heritage Rangelands. The Act establishes two designated access routes within the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland, both of which have provided access for off highway vehicle (OHV) users in the past. These formally established trails provide a means for OHV users to access the OHV trail network in the adjoining Bob Creek Wildland along the protected area's southern boundary. The two access trails are significant because few options exist for access to, and into, the Wildland.

1.3 Description of the Protected Areas

Location and Size

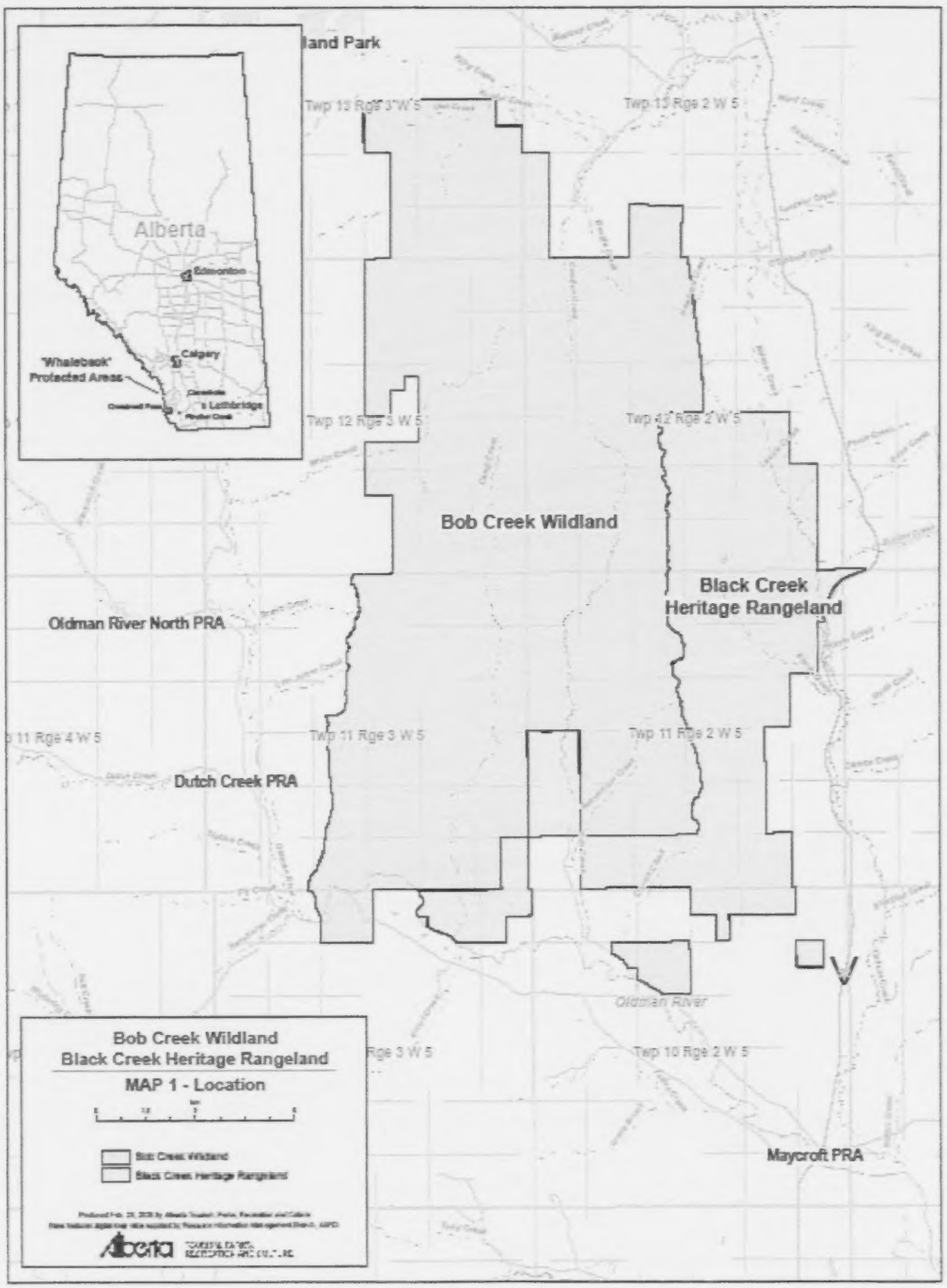
Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland are located in south-western Alberta within the MD of Ranchland (Map 1) between the Livingstone Range to the west, the Oldman River to the south, and Highway No. 22 to the east. Both protected areas are located entirely on public land and share a common boundary along Whaleback Ridge. Together the two protected areas make up what is commonly called the "Whaleback" – one of Alberta's unique ecological areas.

The two protected areas together cover 285 km^2. Bob Creek Wildland is 207.78 km^2 (51,341 ac) in size and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland is 77.60 km^2 (19,176 ac) in size. The Wildland is entirely within the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve.

Ecological Significance

Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland together constitute the largest intact tract of montane landscape within Alberta. Containing a series of spine-like ridges, the landscape within the protected areas alternates between open grasslands and forested areas. Unlike many other foothill and mountainous areas along Alberta's Eastern Slopes, the protected areas are relatively intact (i.e., un-fragmented), not having experienced the same level of pressure from human activity and resource development as other areas of the province. The Wildland and Heritage Rangeland are ecologically significant because of the unique and special features that are found in these protected areas. The Chinook swept areas of the Whaleback also provide critical winter range for a large elk herd and other ungulates. The Whaleback has been classified as an *Environmentally Significant Area* of 'national' importance (Cottonwood Consultants Ltd., 1987).

Map 1


land Park
Twp 13 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 13 Rge 2 W 5
Alberta
Edmonton
Calgary
"Whaleback" Protected Areas
Lethbridge
Twp 12 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 12 Rge 2 W 5
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland
Oldman River North PRA
11 Rge 4 W 5
Twp 11 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 11 Rge 2 W 5
Dutch Creek PRA
Oldman River
Rge 3 W 5
Twp 10 Rge 2 W 5
Maycroft PRA
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland
MAP 1 - Location
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland

Landscape

A comprehensive description of the protected areas has been provided by Geowest Environmental Consultants (1997). The summary that follows in this section (i.e. landscape) and the next section (i.e. flora and fauna) is based largely on Geowest's biophysical inventory.

The Wildland and Heritage Rangeland are underlain by folded and faulted sedimentary rock. Linear ridges are the dominant physiographic landscape features. These ridges, which follow geological fault lines, display a strong north-south orientation as exemplified by Whaleback Ridge – a dominant landscape feature in the protected areas. Several different ice sheets once covered the area and have left their mark on the landscape. Surficial materials include morainal, colluvial, fluvial, glaciofluvial and glaciolacustrine parent materials, which overlay bedrock.

The soils that have developed in the protected areas are variable. Brunisols are characteristically associated with forested areas and Black Chernozems are found in grassland areas. Regosols can be found in riparian zones and Gleysols are present on poorly drained sites. Soils tend to be shallow in upland areas.

Surface runoff from the protected areas drains primarily southward into the Oldman River. Runoff in the northern portion of the Wildland drains into Willow Creek; Willow Creek in turn eventually flows into the Oldman River in the prairies to the east. Cold water springs and seepage areas are found at a number of sites. There are no lakes within the protected areas. Livingstone Ridge (2,170 meters above sea level) is a prominent landscape feature in the south-west corner.

Located in this area is the Livingstone Gap, a narrow, steep-sided pass through which the Oldman River flows as it exits the front ranges. To the east, foothill ridges having a marked linear axis on which sandstone rock outcrops are present; Whaleback Ridge, the dominant ridge, is approximately 29 kilometres in length. Wide valley floors tend to separate the ridge formations. The foothill ridges are characterized by strongly rolling topography. Valleys are characterized by undulating terrain and floodplains.

Historically, the area was used by aboriginal people, primarily to hunt buffalo. With the extirpation of the buffalo in about 1880, ranchers began using the highly productive fescue grasslands to build their cattle herds and cattle ranching has been the dominant land-use in the area since that time. Other land uses that have occurred in the past have included limited timber harvesting and some geo-physical exploration. A 500 KV transmission line parallels Whaleback Ridge on its eastern side, crossing through the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland.

Flora and Fauna

Native vegetation within the protected areas is well adapted to the unique climate and growing conditions found in the area. The climate consists of short, cool, moist summers and cold, dry winters. High evaporation rates are present due to wind and low humidity. Strong Chinook winds, which are most prevalent during the winter months, have the effect of keeping the area intermittently snow-free.

Grasslands occupy drier sites, particularly south and west-facing slopes and valley bottoms. Rough fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, and oatgrass are among the dominant grass varieties found in the grassland community; species dominance is affected by factors such as elevation, moisture, grazing intensity, and brush and forest encroachment. A variety of flowering plants can be found in moister areas. Valley bottoms and riparian zones contain a rich abundance of forbs. Several varieties of rare, uncommon, or unusual plants are found in the protected areas (e.g., silvery everlasting, conimitella, yellow paintbrush, woolly hawkweed, Pacific bluegrass, linear-leaved scorpionweed).

Coniferous forests grow at higher elevations, particularly on north and north-east facing slopes. Trees and extensive shrub communities are found in moist, sheltered locations including valley bottoms and hillsides. Dominant tree species include aspen, balsam poplar, lodgepole pine, Douglas fir (including some large, old specimens), and white spruce. Other species include limber pine, whitebark pine, Engelmann spruce, and subalpine fir. Common under-story species are shrubby cinquefoil, creeping juniper, and mountain goldenrod. Dominant shrubs include several willow species and bog birch.

The diversity of vegetation communities support a rich variety of wildlife. Whaleback provides habitat for as many as 150 bird species, 57 mammal species (ungulates, carnivores, and small mammals), two reptile species, and four amphibian species. Several mammals are considered to be special because they are uncommon in the Montane Natural Sub-Region or because they are at the edge of their normal range, including: pikas, hoary marmots, golden-mantled ground squirrels, thirteen-lined ground squirrels, and sagebrush voles. From a management perspective, one of the most significant mammals is elk. The protected areas together comprise one of the two most significant elk wintering ranges within the province. The winter population of the Whaleback elk herd has averaged from 1,000 – 1,100 animals during the 1980s and 1990s (J.C., 2002).

The ecological diversity attracts numerous bird species including: long-billed curlews, western meadowlarks, Clark's nutcrackers, Harlequin ducks, and white-tailed ptarmigans. Cavity nesting birds include the mountain bluebird and northern pygmy-owl. Uncommon bird species include the prairie falcon, lazuli bunting, mountain bluebird, Cassin's finch, American dipper, and bobolink. The crest of the Livingstone Range is a seasonal flyway which is used by thousands of golden eagles and other birds of prey. (D.M., 2004)

The relatively intact landscape and pristine character make these protected areas significant for maintaining a rich variety of wildlife species. The reference *Biophysical Inventory, Significant, Sensitive and Disturbance Features of the Whaleback Area* (Geowest, 1997) should be consulted for a full description of wildlife species that are found in the protected areas.

1.4 Alberta's Network of Protected Areas

Alberta's natural heritage and ecological diversity is preserved through a system of protected areas that occur throughout the province. Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland are part of this provincial network.

Protected areas in Alberta are currently established under three provincial statutes:

- *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act*
- *Provincial Parks Act*
- *Willmore Wilderness Park Act*

These statutes and their accompanying regulations guide management, administration, and use of protected areas.

Protected Area Program Goals

Four broad goals are cornerstones of Alberta's protected area program. These goals are:

Conservation & Protection – Parks conserve Alberta's natural heritage and associated cultural heritage for current and future generations.

Outdoor Recreation & Healthy Living – Parks provide diverse, enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities that contribute to healthy lifestyles.

Learning & Engagement – Parks offer an opportunity to learn about, appreciate and care for Alberta's natural and cultural heritage.

Tourism & Community – Parks foster sustainable, nature-based experiences for Albertans and visitors that contribute to the economic and social fabric of Alberta.

Natural Regions Framework

A scientific framework has been developed to identify and classify different bio-geo-climatic regions/landscapes within the province. The framework consists of a landscape classification hierarchy that identifies landscape types based on natural characteristics including: landform, hydrology, climate, geology, soils, and vegetation.

Alberta is divided into six Natural Regions: Boreal Forest; Rocky Mountains; Foothills; Canadian Shield; Parkland; and Grassland. Each Natural Region is subdivided into Subregions.

Subregions in turn are subdivided into Level 1 Natural History Themes, which are subdivided into Level 2 Themes, which are further subdivided into Level 3 Themes.

The Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland occur entirely within the Rocky Mountains Natural Region except for a small portion of the Heritage Rangeland, which occurs within the Grasslands Natural Region (Map 2). Approximately 68 percent of the protected areas is classified as Montane subregion, 30 percent is classified as Subalpine subregion, and 2 percent is classified as Foothills Fescue subregion.

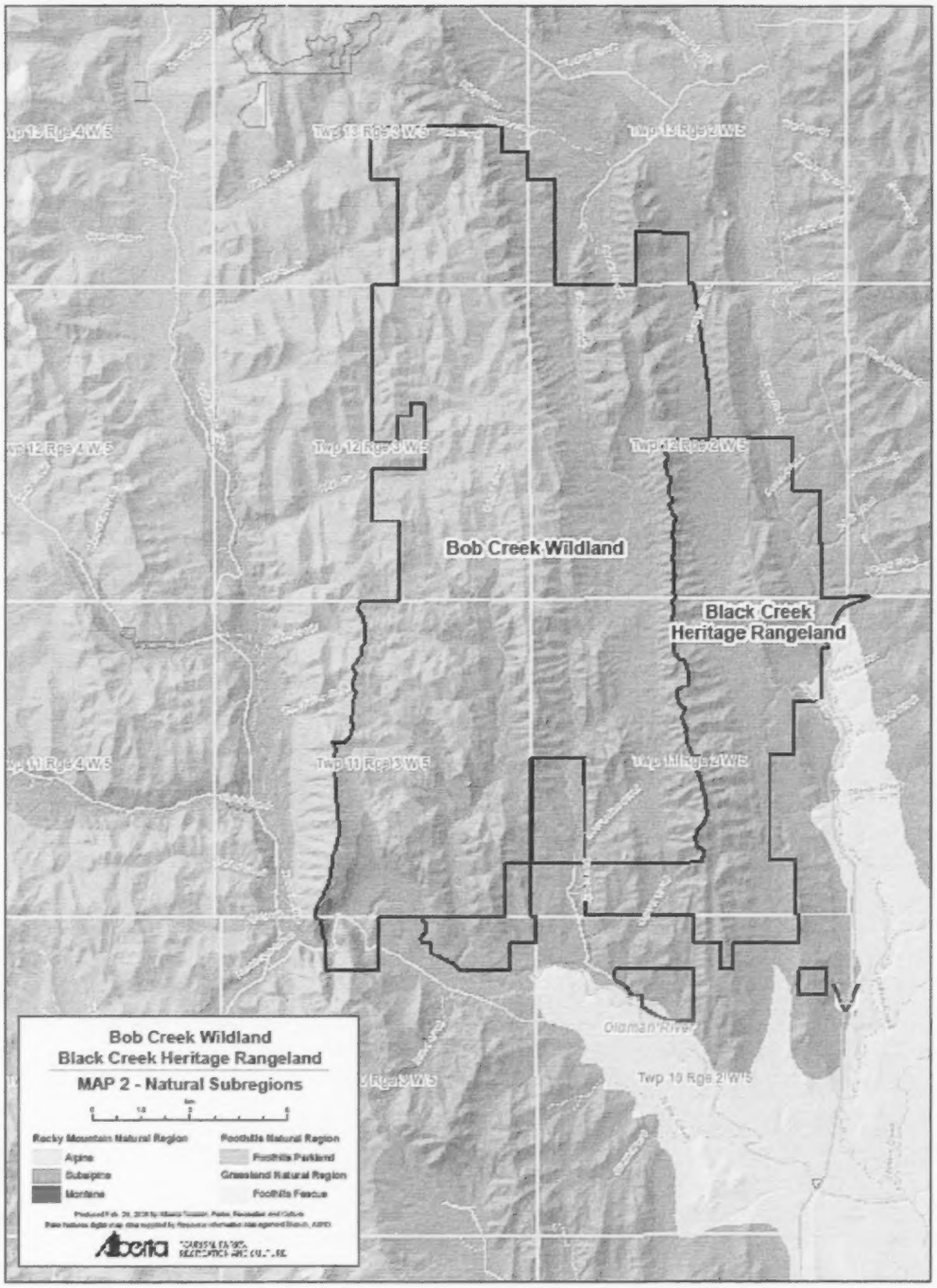
1.5 Broad Management Intent

Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland will be managed to maintain and preserve their unique natural heritage (i.e., soil, flora, fauna, landscape features, and natural/ecological processes), culture, and biodiversity in perpetuity for future generations. Other provincial protected areas program goals (i.e., Learning & Engagement, Outdoor Recreation & Healthy Living, Tourism & Community) are of secondary importance.

Management of the two protected areas allows for various land uses that are consistent with maintaining the ecological integrity of the area. A conservative and holistic approach to management will maintain a balance between nature and human activity.

All users of the protected area will be encouraged to accept stewardship responsibility for maintaining the ecological diversity and integrity of the two protected areas.

Map 2


Twp 13 Rge 4 W5
Twp 13 Rge 3 W5
Twp 13 Rge 2 W5
Twp 12 Rge 4 W5
Twp 12 Rge 3 W5
Twp 12 Rge 2 W5
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek
Heritage Rangeland
Twp 11 Rge 4 W5
Twp 11 Rge 3 W5
Twp 11 Rge 2 W5
Oldman River
Twp 10 Rge 3 W5
Twp 10 Rge 2 W5
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland
MAP 2 - Natural Subregions
Rocky Mountain Natural Region
Alpine
Subalpine
Montane
Foothills Natural Region
Foothills Parkland
Grassland Natural Region
Foothills Fescue

Learning & Engagement and Outdoor Recreation & Healthy Living goals will be met, to the extent that their attainment does not conflict with or impinge on the Conservation & Protection goal. The Tourism & Community goal will not include facility development within the protected areas.

Natural features and ecological processes will be managed to ensure the ongoing ecological integrity of the Montane, Sub-Alpine, and Foothills Fescue ecosystems. The Wildland and Heritage Rangeland will together constitute one management entity within the larger landscape.

Only those land uses and activities that do not undermine the ecological integrity of the area will be permitted. Land uses that are excluded from both protected areas, include:

- commercial logging
- tourism and recreational development, i.e., services, concessions, and facilities
- exploration and extraction of surface materials (e.g., sand, gravel)
- exploration and development of Crown-owned minerals (oil, gas, coal, metallic and industrial minerals)
- new road development
- construction of pipelines, electric transmission lines, telecommunication towers
- cultivation of land for agricultural purposes.
- wind farms.

The protected areas provide an outstanding example of the Montane Natural Subregion. Minimal industrial disturbance has occurred prior to establishment and both areas are relatively pristine in character. Grazing disposition holders have demonstrated responsible stewardship and good management of the landscape, thereby ensuring the area's ongoing ecological integrity. Provincial government resource management actions and traditional activities (primarily ranching) have influenced the landscape pattern that currently exists within the protected areas.

1.6 Management Principles

The following management principles will guide decision making for Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland.

Adaptive Management
"A dynamic planning or modelling process that recognizes the future cannot be predicted perfectly. In response to these imperfect predictions, planning and management strategies are modified frequently as better information becomes available. It applies scientific principles and methods to improve management activities incrementally, as decision-makers learn from experience and new scientific findings, and adapt to changing social expectations and demands" (Dictionary of Natural Resources Management, 1996). Adaptive management is "a tenet of ecological management in which human resource users are flexible to change the way they interact with ecosystems, based upon the need for and availability of new information" (Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy, May 1997).

Shared Stewardship
'Shared' stewardship implies a collaborative approach among user groups in managing and caring for the land and its resources so that they can be passed on to future generations unimpaired. Shared stewardship requires that government agencies – having a legislated mandate for land and resource management – work co-operatively with disposition holders, resource users, interest groups and individuals to achieve common stewardship goals.

Responsible Stewardship
The willing commitment of user groups to conduct themselves, and to carry out their activities, in a manner which prevents unacceptable environmental impacts and which maintains fully functioning ecosystems at all levels (from the local site to the larger landscape). Users of the protected areas are encouraged to share with government agencies information that will assist provincial staff in managing the natural environment, human activities, and resource values. New information will be incorporated within databases as appropriate.

Ecosystem Based Management
Ecosystem based management is a systematic process – based on good judgment and sound science – which fosters the sustainable use of natural resources by considering the ecological response and implications of proposed management practices, and by integrating economic, ecological, social, and technological considerations (over the short-term and long-term, and from the site to the landscape level). Ecosystem based management allows for the use of natural resources while simultaneously maintaining the integrity and productivity of ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. Ecosystem based management seeks to protect particularly valuable ecosystems, restore degraded habitats, and rehabilitate altered ecosystems. (adapted from Rodolphe Schlaepfer, 1997)

Ecosystem based management necessitates that resource managers and users develop a better understanding of the processes by which natural systems sustain themselves and that management actions emulate natural processes so as to maintain healthy, dynamic and diverse ecosystems.

Ecosystem Sustainability
Ecosystems will be managed to yield a flow of resources, values and human benefits:

- without compromising natural landscapes and their processes;
- while safeguarding the ongoing productive and renewal capacities, as well as the genetic, species and ecological diversity, of ecosystems; and
- by avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects of activities on the environment.

Precautionary Principle
Caution will be exercised whenever uncertainty exists about the consequences of intended management actions or when the effects of land uses and resource-based activities are not known.

Coordinated Resource Management
Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) is a planning and resource management approach in which participating agencies, organizations and individuals agree to communicate and cooperate with each other when developing and implementing conservation and resource management strategies. CRM requires that participants develop and adopt consensus-based resource management objectives, and reach agreement on those land uses and human activities that are permitted in a defined geographical area. CRM provides a forum for the identification and resolution of issues, the exchange of information and ideas, and the establishment of mutually beneficial goals.

Referrals (whether formal or informal) are the means by which a co-ordinating agency, approval agency or decision-making body solicits input from key stakeholders (government and non-government) to make an informed decision. Internal government referrals ensure appropriate agencies are informed, facilitate the exchange of information, and allow for the development of an integrated government position/decision on a given matter. Referrals are based on the principle of 'consultation before action'.

The Memorandum of Understanding between Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (see Appendix 2) provides the framework for coordinated resource management within the two protected areas.

Observe Legislated Mandates
The statutory authority conferred to provincial government departments and agencies for land and resource management will be observed. This authority will not be delegated or assigned to other entities, groups or individuals.

Monitoring
"The process of checking, observing, and measuring outcomes for key variables or specific ecological phenomena against a predefined quantitative objective or standard. It takes place after an event or process has been initiated or completed to evaluate if the anticipated or assumed results of a management plan have been or are being realized and/or if implementation is proceeding as planned. . . . monitoring is the systematic measurement or analysis of change . . ." (Dictionary of Natural Resources Management, 1996). [see also Sections 3.1 and 3.3 in this plan]

Measurability
Measurable management objectives and guidelines will be adopted.

1.7 Adjacent Land Uses

The two protected areas are part of a larger ecosystem, and will be managed to achieve landscape-level goals and objectives (as set out in fisheries, wildlife, forest pest, weed, fire management, . . .strategies). The Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) will influence land use and human activities on adjacent lands. Other plans and policies such as; grazing management plans; timber harvesting plans; wildlife management

strategies; MD of Ranchland Municipal Development Plan; access management plans, ERCB Informational Letter IL 93-9, (Oil and Gas Development in the Eastern Slopes – Southern Portion) will also direct the use of land and resources in the vicinity of the two protected areas. Policy direction and management regimes contained in different management plans and strategies need to be consistent.

To ensure that the protected areas unique biophysical features are not unduly impacted, provincial agencies and affected stakeholders will be encouraged to consult with each other to explore ways in which the potential impacts of adjacent land uses/activities can be mitigated – to help preserve the unique character and qualities of the Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland – subject to existing government policies and regulatory provisions. Disposition holders and operators will be encouraged to adopt 'best practices' to minimize the footprint of their activities.

1.8 Review & Approval of Activities not Identified in the Plan

The broad management intent, principles, resource management objectives and strategies contained in this plan, applicable legislation and government policy direction, provide guidance to staff who are involved in reviewing and responding to referrals, applications or other types of approvals (i.e., dispositions, authorizations). Applications that are received for activities not explicitly referenced in this plan will be reviewed and processed in accordance with the intent of this plan, relevant legislation, and following existing government review processes. Referral processes will identify:

- potential impacts associated with a proposal
- reasons for rejecting a proposal/applications
- any mitigation actions that must be taken to address environmental concerns if the use, activity, or development proceeds

2.0 Land and Resource Management

2.1 Rangeland Management

Synopsis

Rangelands have developed under a history of grazing and fire. This part of the province, which is subject to frequent Chinook winds, historically provided important winter range for bison and other indigenous grazers. Grazing pressure, in conjunction with frequent, low intensity fires, contributed to the establishment of a mosaic of forests and grasslands. Generally, grasslands dominate drier sites while closed forest stands and shrub lands occupy high moisture sites. Since the 1900's, fire has been effectively removed from the ecosystem with the last major fire occurring in 1936. As a result, forest encroachment has occurred onto open grasslands.

Livestock grazing was introduced into the area in the mid 1880's when the federal government issued leases for livestock grazing in the 'North–West Territories'. The Walrond Ranche Company acquired grazing leases for approximately 216,640 acres of federal land. The Walrond's land holdings included a significant portion of land which today is part of the two protected areas. Since the introduction of livestock to the area, livestock (primarily cattle), and to a lesser extent, native elk herds, have dominated grazing on the protected area's rangelands.

Livestock grazing within the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland is administered under the *Public Lands Act*. There are three grazing leases in the Heritage Rangeland, currently providing approximately 8,300 animal unit months of grazing annually. Livestock grazing within Bob Creek Wildland is administered under the *Forest Reserves Act*. There are eleven grazing allotments that are either completely or partially contained within the Wildland, providing approximately 9,200 animal unit months of grazing annually.

Management Objectives

1. To maintain livestock grazing as a legitimate and traditional land use activity in the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. Livestock grazing is an important tool for maintaining rangeland health and rangeland resources for use by both livestock and wildlife. *(Management Strategies #1 and 2 apply)*
2. To develop and/or maintain range management plans for each grazing disposition. Range management plans identify sound range management practices that conserve soil, vegetation, and water for long-term sustained forage productivity and ecological health. The principles of range management include:
    - balance grazing demand with the available forage supply;
    - avoid grazing of rangelands when they are vulnerable to damage;
    - distribute livestock grazing pressure over the landscape; and
    - provide effective rest after grazing to improve or maintain native plant communities.

    (Management Strategies #2, 4a, and 4b apply)

3. To maintain or enhance the ecological health of the native plant communities in a state that closely resembles the representative plant community or achieves a high ecological status (*Rangeland Health Assessment for Grassland, Forest and Tame Pasture*, May 2003). Generally, grazing is managed to attain or maintain plant communities in a healthy condition. *(Management Strategies #2 and 4a apply)*
4. To document the location and status (population size, threats, or management concerns) of any rare plants and rare plant communities as defined by the most current version of the provincial rare plant tracking list – Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre Plant Species of Special Concern. *(Management Strategy #6 applies)*
5. To manage plant communities that have become modified to non-native species – due to historic conditions and invasion – for their conservation values (plant vigour and soil and watershed protection), and to minimize further invasion into native plant communities. *(Management Strategies #2, 5, and 7 apply)*
6. To maintain a landscape that reflects a diversity of grassland, forest, and shrub cover communities associated with the Montane Subregion. The natural tendency of ecological succession is toward forest cover, altering the desired balance in diversity. Changes in this desired structural diversity due to succession will be addressed through appropriate management treatments. *(Management Strategies #8a and 8b apply)*
7. To manage riparian areas for forage production and the maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat. The objective is to maintain or attain a healthy functioning riparian system by conserving water, soil and vegetation. *(Management Strategies #2 and 3 apply)*
8. To ensure sustainable stocking rates based on the capability and ecological health of the range. *(Management Strategy #9 applies)*
9. To allow for range maintenance projects which improve the overall management of the rangeland for the benefit of livestock and wildlife. *(Management Strategy #10 applies)*
10. To adopt measures which prevent the establishment and spread of noxious and restricted weeds, and to control infestations as outlined in the *Weed Control Act* and the Municipal District of Ranchland weed control bylaws. *(Management Strategy #11 applies)*
11. To ensure that re-vegetation and reclamation projects return a disturbed area to its original (historic) capability and natural vegetation. *(Management Strategy #12 applies)*

Management Strategies

1. Forest reserve grazing permits and public lands grazing leases will be used to manage and administer sustainable livestock grazing practices.
2. Range inventories will be used to establish a baseline of range health to be used for future range management. The expectation is to maintain or eventually attain a state where 85% of the plant communities are in a healthy condition, with no more than 5% in an unhealthy condition.
3. a) Riparian health inventories (using the *Caring for the Green Zone: Riparian Health Assessment for Streams and Small Rivers – Field Workbook*, 2001 version or its successor) will be completed for all major riparian areas in order to provide a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of riparian health. The inventories will be used to determine watershed condition and will provide a basis for determining future management initiatives. Riparian inventories will provide a baseline for the comparison of future riparian health assessments and inventory/monitoring results.

Riparian areas in the two protected areas have a long history of human disturbance that includes heavy grazing of valley bottoms and some human settlement in valley bottoms. These disturbances have resulted in:

- the displacement of native species by smooth brome, Kentucky Bluegrass, Timothy and other invasive agronomic species
- a reduction in the regeneration and establishment of tree and shrub species
- a reduction in streambank root-mass protection attributable to species shifts
- increased areas of human-caused bare ground
- structural alterations to streambanks

Long-term targets for riparian health in the protected areas have been set such that at least 60% of riparian areas are rated as healthy and no more than 15% rated as unhealthy. The recovery process will occur over an extended period of time. During the recovery period, monitoring will be undertaken to assess the level of recovery and to determine if any factors are affecting recovery success.

4. a) Land management agencies (see Appendix 2) will monitor the rangeland resource at three levels:
   - i Establish and/or maintain permanent benchmarks to:
     - develop standard range and riparian health protocols to assess range and riparian health.
     - establish photo points where broad scale vegetative changes, such as forest encroachment, can be monitored.
   - ii Carry out audits of individual grazing dispositions:
     - an audit system will be established whereby individual grazing dispositions will receive a formal inspection at a minimum of at least once during every five-year period.
     - the audit will assess range health and overall grazing management (i.e., utilization, distribution, grazing systems, and period of use).
   - iii Establish a practical method to assess structural and life form diversity changes on the landscape.

   b) New range management plans will be developed for individual dispositions. Range management plans will be based on new or recent range resource information (i.e., inventories). Range and riparian surveys will be the basis for establishing range management plans for individual dispositions. Plans will be developed by land management agencies with the involvement of disposition holders. Livestock management within the area will be guided by the principles and direction outlined in this plan. Individual range management plans will be 'adaptive' documents that can be modified and updated for the purpose of improving management. Formal reviews and updates will be undertaken as required.
5. The cultivation of native communities will not be allowed. Land disturbances for the purpose of re-establishing native species on sites that presently contain non-native species will be considered after a favourable peer review of techniques.
6. The status of known rare plants and rare plant communities will be monitored. Rare plant sites will be recorded during range and riparian inventories. The Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre will be contacted prior to undertaking the inventories in order to obtain any existing information on rare plants. The Centre will provide a procedure to assess and record sites. This information will be forwarded to the Centre.

7. Haying operations (i.e., the mechanical harvesting of forages) will not be allowed except to control non-native species (e.g., timothy).
8. a) Structural and life form diversity is highly desirable, both from an ecological standpoint and for achieving societal values. Visual preference studies indicate that mosaic landscapes are highly preferred by society (Olson and Olson, 2000). Natural succession without disturbance, is towards forest cover. To maintain a landscape mosaic, forest and brush encroachment will be managed so that it does not increase by more than 5% or decrease by more than 20%. Management strategies should maintain similar plant community compositions and ratios to ensure that the values provided by each plant community type are maintained. The focus of management actions will be on controlling the encroachment of aspen, Douglas Fir, pine, and shrub species onto native grasslands.
   b) Control of forest and brush encroachment may be necessary to manage succession through the removal of mature or immature trees or stands that are encroaching onto grasslands. Removal will be through prescribed burning, conventional methods (i.e., brushing, mowing, and dragging), livestock management (i.e., stocking rates, and grazing times), and other suitable methods that may be developed. A plan will be required to ensure that vegetation removal objectives comply with the overall management guidelines for the area.
9. Stocking rates and carrying capacities will be based on long term monitoring, rangeland inventories, and range management plans. Stocking rates will be set to attain or maintain a healthy condition for the majority of rangelands.
10. Specific plans will be developed for any rangeland and habitat maintenance project that will improve the management of livestock and wildlife. Plans will outline the purpose of these projects and will be reviewed and approved by the Province to ensure that plans comply with the overall management guidelines for the area. Rangeland and habitat maintenance projects that will be considered include: new fencing, off-stream water development, brush management, new trail development/reclamation or any other activity that will improve livestock distribution or addresses a management concern.
11. The Municipal District of Ranchland is responsible for the enforcement of the *Weed Control Act*. Weed control will be addressed in accordance with existing provincial policies and programs. Under the *Public Lands Act*, weed control in the White Area is the responsibility of the leaseholder. Restricted weeds must be 'destroyed' (Alberta Weed Regulation). Noxious and selected nuisance weeds will be 'controlled' using methods that are effective and least detrimental to other vegetation, animals, and soil. Restricted and noxious weeds will be monitored through an inventory of infestations and an assessment of the effectiveness and impacts of treatments. The use of herbicides to control or eliminate undesirable vegetation will be examined on a case-by-case basis. When determining the suitability of herbicides, consideration will be given to the effectiveness of the product and its ecological 'footprint' on non-target species and on ecological processes.
12. Re-vegetation and reclamation projects will focus on careful topsoil management and the use of adaptive management actions to allow for natural recovery. Where seeding is necessary, native seed collected from local seed sources will be used for re-vegetation. On erosion prone sites, the seeding of annuals that have been approved by the Province may be considered.

2.2 Forest Management

Synopsis

Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland are part of a complex landscape that includes a number of forest and plant communities. The Montane and Sub-alpine are the two main sub-regions that occur within the two protected areas. Common tree species are: trembling aspen (Populus tremuloides), balsam poplar (Populus balsamifera), lodgepole pine (Pinus contorta), Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii), white spruce (Picea glauca), and limber pine (Pinus flexillis). Douglas fir and limber pine trees found within the protected areas are among the oldest trees found in Alberta, reaching ages of 400 and 575 years respectively.

Douglas fir stands tend to occupy well-drained soils. Individual trees tend to be well spaced and were able to withstand repeated, low-intensity fires in the past. Ridge tops and rock outcrops provide habitat for limber pine. Mature white spruce stands typically occur in riparian areas that have not been significantly affected by wildfire. A significant portion of the protected areas has been colonized by an even-aged stand of lodgepole pine since the last major fire in 1936. The encroachment of both coniferous and deciduous tree species onto open grasslands has occurred since settlers occupied the area. The removal of bison and the effective control of wildfires have contributed to the expansion of forests onto former grasslands. Control of wildfires over the last 70 years has resulted in the establishment of fairly dense, multi-layered forests.

Historically, the protected areas' timber resources were considered when establishing the annual allowable cut for the C-5 forest management unit. However, compared to other sites in the C-5 unit, logging activities within the protected areas have been quite limited and modest. Timber that was harvested was often used locally. Logging of mature coniferous trees, by a commercial operator, utilizing a diameter selection prescription occurred on Black Mountain and along Whaleback Ridge (to the north of Black Mountain) before the establishment of the two protected areas.

With the designation of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland in 1999, the protected areas were removed from the 'net' (i.e., 'active' timber harvesting) land base of the C-5 Forest Management Unit. This action was consistent with the provincial government's commitment to eliminate commercial timber harvesting in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland.

Forest Management

Management Objectives

1. To maintain a mix of forest, shrub and grassland communities consistent with the structure and diversity that is found within the protected areas.

Management Strategies

1. a) Prescribed burning and prescribed tree removal operations will be the preferred methods for balancing forest cover types with other plant communities. Consideration will be given to the following when undertaking stand removal operations to achieve a desired landscape vegetation pattern:
    - mimic naturally occurring forest processes where possible
    - encourage natural plant re-vegetation, site recovery, and plant succession
    - if necessary, local native seed sources will be used for site re-establishment
    - undertake reclamation work where human activity results in significant site disturbance or environmental degradation
    - address the needs and concerns of natural heritage values and various land uses (e.g., wildlife habitat, livestock rangelands, wildlife travel corridors, rare plants) when developing tree removal operational plans

b) Operational plans will be developed before commencing with prescribed burns and/or prescribed stand removals. Operational plans that are prepared by non-government entities must be approved by the Province before vegetation removal or site modifications can occur. Operational plans will identify the objectives of a forest management treatment and outline the methods that will be employed in field operations.

c) Minimizing human disturbance associated with any forest management projects will be a priority in the planning process and during field operations. Preference will be given to environmentally sensitive tree removal methods.

Fire Management

Management Objectives

1. To recognize the multi-faceted nature of fire by:
    - aggressively suppressing wildfires; and
    - using prescribed fire as a management tool.

Management Strategies

1.

a) All wildfires will be assessed, and where deemed to be a threat to the ecological integrity of the protected areas or other local values, will be dealt with through quick and aggressive initial attack measures. Should such actions fail, increased fire control resources will be assigned to ensure total suppression. The impacts associated with fire suppression activities will be minimized. Impacts caused by equipment will be assessed after suppression efforts are concluded and remedial actions will be undertaken.

b) Prescribed fire may be used for one or more of the following reasons: habitat development, range management (e.g., to control aspen encroachment), fuel modification or fuel reduction, insect or disease control, or silvicultural treatments. A research program may be undertaken in conjunction with a prescribed burn to further scientific knowledge on the effects of fire on the ecosystem.

c) Prescribed fire will be considered to eradicate or control insects and diseases.

Insect and Disease Management

Management Objectives

1. To maintain a healthy forest ecosystem.
2. To monitor the forest for insect and disease outbreaks.

Management Strategies

1.
   a) Efforts will be made to effectively manage insects and disease:
      - to maintain the ecological values of the area
      - when pests threaten adjacent forest resources
      - when insect and disease outbreaks reach epidemic proportions

   b) The feasibility and effectiveness of manual, biological, mechanical, and chemical techniques will be evaluated when determining how to best control insects and diseases. Sanitation cutting and controlled burns will be the preferred methods for controlling insects and disease.
2. Monitoring of forest insects and diseases will occur to:
      - detect early signs of insect and disease outbreaks
      - determine if an outbreak is expanding or contracting
      - determine whether an outbreak is endemic in nature
      - determine what appropriate remedial actions should be taken to control a particular outbreak

2.3 Fisheries Management

Synopsis

The Oldman River is the major drainage within the region. Its upper reaches are divided from the middle and lower reaches by the Oldman River Dam and Reservoir. Within the protected areas, the river contains cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, bull trout, and mountain whitefish. The river is a major destination for trout fishermen.

White Creek, a tributary of the Livingstone River, is a productive stream for cutthroat trout and contains occasional bull trout. Camp Creek contains cutthroat trout/rainbow trout hybrids. Bob Creek contains cutthroat trout.

These streams are managed under the Eastern Slopes trout stream regulations. Streams are managed through seasonal closures and restrictive possession limits. The Oldman River fishery is managed under a "catch and release" regulation. Other streams are managed with catch and minimum size limits and seasonal closures.

Management Objectives

1. To maintain or enhance fish populations and fish habitat within the protected areas.
2. To manage the sport fishery within a larger regional context.

Management Strategies

1. a) Further inventory work will be completed to determine which fish species are present in Bob Creek, Camp Creek, and White Creek and to obtain basic data on fisheries habitat. Inventory will be undertaken as part of the 'Co-operative Fisheries Inventory Program'.
   b) Riparian health assessments will be completed for Chaffen Creek, White Creek, and Hunter Creek. Assessments have been completed for Bob Creek, Camp Creek, and Black Creek.
   c) Stream habitat improvement projects may be undertaken as necessary.
   d) Stream crossings associated with the OHV designated trail system (as outlined in the *Public Access and Motorized Recreational Activities* section of this plan) will be inspected to determine:
      - the impact of open water fords by OHVs
      - whether bank and channel hardening, creek crossing structures, or other mitigation measures are required
      - if designated trail segments should be closed or trails relocated
      - if seasonal restrictions should be implemented.
2. Sport fishing regulations that apply to the protected areas will be established when regulations are developed for Fisheries Management Area ES1.

2.4 Wildlife Management

Synopsis

"Wildlife" is used in this section to refer to native species of mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian that is found within the protected areas.

Elk and Mule Deer migrate into the area during the late fall and winter months to feed on wind blown ridges and south-facing, grass covered slopes. In recent years, the importance of this area to small elk herds during the summer months has increased. Whenever large concentrations of ungulates congregate, large predators that are dependant on these prey species follow. Wolves, coyotes, and cougars regularly range through the protected areas. During the summer, black and grizzly bears travel through and forage in the area.

Livestock depredation by large carnivores has occurred. Fish and Wildlife staff have been working with local ranchers to minimize livestock mortality and to remove offending predators when necessary. A local carnivore advisory committee has been established to address carnivore related issues. The focus of the committee has been to address and manage depredation of livestock by wolves.

The protected areas are located mainly within Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 308 with a portion of Bob Creek Wildland located in WMU 402. Fish and Wildlife staff regularly inventory wildlife populations in the WMU's. Harvest levels for hunted game species are established based on data obtained through these inventories. At present, the following species can be harvested: elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose, black bears, cougars and wolves. Wildlife is being managed in accordance with provincial wildlife policies and species management plans. Much of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland fall within the 'critical wildlife' zone, as outlined in the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Integrated Resource Plan.

A registered trap line overlays a portion of the two protected areas. The licensed trapper harvests a number of different fur bearers. Trapping seasons and quota limits are set by Fish and Wildlife Division. Fur management areas are managed in accordance with provincial policies and trapping regulations.

The greatest threat to wildlife is the loss of habitat. Effective fire suppression efforts during the last several decades have resulted in the encroachment of shrub and tree communities on former grasslands. Fire, or vegetation management approaches that mimic the effects of fire, are considered to be necessary to introduce early plant succession stages back onto the landscape in order to maintain wildlife habitat.

Management Objectives

1. To manage wildlife populations using an ecosystem, 'coarse-filter' approach *(see glossary).
2. To manage wildlife populations in a manner that is consistent with direction contained in applicable Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) strategies and provincial/regional wildlife management plans.
3. To conserve biological diversity.
4. To retain viable populations of native wildlife species.
5. To maintain and enhance wildlife habitat and habitat connectivity.
6. To complete inventories and studies for the purpose of effectively managing wildlife species and their habitats.
7. To manage large predators and problem wildlife using a consultative process.

Management Strategies

1. a) The protected areas will not be treated as an 'island', having a wildlife management regime which is distinctly different from adjacent areas.
   b) Wildlife species that are at risk may be managed using a 'fine-filter' approach.
2. Wildlife management goals, strategies, and regulations, will continue to be established for individual WMUs adapting to landscape/habitat conditons and population trends as required. Wildlife management direction for the WMU's will be applied to the protected areas that the protected areas are included in.
3. Historical and current levels of species biodiversity will be determined and evaluated on an ongoing basis through an assessment of species occurrence and relative abundance, and wildlife habitat associations.

4. a) Big game surveys will be used to establish allocation levels for hunted species.
   b) Fur bearer populations will be monitored to determine population levels when necessary.
   c) Livestock and domestic exotic species that are infected with diseases which are detrimental to wildlife will be excluded. Use of exotic/domestic species such as llamas for commercial or recreational purposes may be allowed subject to existing health requirements for commercial users.
   d) No exotic species of wildlife will be introduced.
5. a) Habitat mapping and habitat evaluations will be undertaken as necessary to quantify habitat conditions for 'keystone' wildlife species (i.e., elk, grizzly bear) and other species of interest or concern.
   b) Habitat and rangeland management decisions will take into account the needs of both wildlife and livestock.
   c) Habitat management will emphasize the retention of all ecosystem components and the retention (or emulation) of natural processes. Habitat improvement and enhancement projects will be evaluated and prioritized on a multi-species basis; the benefits of habitat projects for livestock will also be considered.
6. a) Information gaps will be addressed through ongoing species/habitat inventories, studies, research projects, aerial surveys, etc. Current inventory activities will be expanded to include carnivores, fur bearers, and non-game species.
   b) Research on wildlife-habitat associations will be undertaken to; establish Montane/Sub-alpine biodiversity levels, identify 'keystone' species, and identify key habitat features in need of protection and/or management.
   c) A monitoring program will be established to assess ecosystem health and change over time. Monitoring protocols and target species to be monitored will be determined in consultation with stakeholders.
7. a) Fish and Wildlife Division will maintain a local Carnivore Advisory Committee for the Oldman River basin. The purpose of this multi-stakeholder committee is to provide input for the management of large carnivores, particularly in relation to livestock predation and human safety issues.
   b) Ungulates and carnivores will be managed to reduce 'wildlife conflict occurrences' (i.e., reduce wildlife impacts on human life and property). Should wildlife conflicts emerge, appropriate remedial actions will be implemented that have minimal impacts on non-target species, people, and property.
   c) Registered trappers may be approached to assist with predator management activities in the protected areas.

2.5 Minerals

Synopsis

The two protected areas are relatively untouched by mineral activity. Some seismic activity has taken place over the years. No oil and gas wells exist within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland.

In April 1994, the Energy Resources Conservation Board denied an application of Amoco Canada Petroleum to drill an exploratory well in the Bob Creek area of the Whaleback (ERCB Decision 94-8). In the Board's judgement, Amoco's application failed to serve "the overall public interest," primarily because of the impact natural gas development could have on the "ecological, recreational and aesthetic value" of the Whaleback area. In May 1999 BP Amoco (formerly Amoco Canada Petroleum) agreed not to develop their Crown petroleum and natural gas rights in the Whaleback area. At a ceremony shortly thereafter, Premier Klein announced the designation of the two protected areas. At the same ceremony, BP Amoco donated their two Crown petroleum and natural gas licences, which include portions of the two protected areas, to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The two existing Crown petroleum and natural gas licences held by the Nature Conservancy of Canada expired in April 2004.

There are approximately 3 ½ sections of freehold minerals in the two protected areas (2 ½ sections are in the south-western portion of the Wildland and just over one section is in the south-western portion of the Heritage Rangeland).

Management Objectives

1. To respect freehold mineral interests in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland.
2. To preclude the development of Crown minerals in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland.

Management Strategies

Freehold Minerals

A freehold mineral title is a legal interest in minerals, which is treated the same as a legal interest in private land. If freehold minerals within a protected area are approved for development, access may be provided to the mineral owner subject to 'normal' regulatory processes to allow for the development of minerals in a manner that does not compromise the ecological integrity of adjacent lands. Should opportunities present themselves, freehold mineral owner's mineral rights could be gifted to the Province of Alberta and then reserved.

Crown Minerals

1. The exploration and development of oil, gas, coal, or metallic and industrial minerals will not be permitted.
2. No new mineral rights will be issued within the protected areas.

2.6 Commercial Recreation, Guiding and Outfitting

Synopsis

Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation is responsible for the administration of commercial recreation activities in protected areas. A permit is required by anyone who leads or guides other people on recreational trips. Guided activities that currently take place include: horseback trips, guided hunts, and guided hiking. These activities occur primarily during the summer and fall seasons.

Because of the unique natural features and the establishment of new motorized access restrictions through this plan, it is anticipated that potential exists for increased non-motorized commercial recreation activity. New forms of guided activities and commercial recreational ventures may be attracted in the future. To adequately safeguard the protected areas from undesirable impacts associated with these activities, the level of commercial recreational activities will be limited, activity monitored and appropriate management actions will be implemented to address emerging issues.

Management Objectives

1. To allow limited low-impact commercial recreational activities.
2. To monitor and assess commercial recreation activities.

Management Strategies

1. a) Commercial recreational activities must safeguard natural heritage and be compatible with the existing ranching culture. Examples of compatible commercial recreational activities include: horse-based outfitting and guiding; bird watching and wildlife viewing tours; organised hiking and backpacking tours, and; photography workshops.
   b) Horses and equipment must be managed to minimize impact and prevent the introduction of weeds (i.e., use weed-free feed).
   c) Commercial recreation operators will be identified as a specific user group in an Education Plan that will be developed.

2. a) Maintaining the ecological integrity and 'western heritage' character of the protected areas will take precedence over commercial recreational activities.
   b) Appropriate policy and an approval process will be developed to address commercial recreational activities.
   c) Monitoring will be undertaken to determine the type of commercial recreational activities that are occurring and to assess the impact. A methodology may be adopted or developed to assess levels of use, environmental impacts, and recreational carrying capacities.

2.7 Non-motorized Recreational Activities

Synopsis

A wide range of activities fall into the category of non-motorized recreation. A partial list includes: hiking, backpacking, wildlife viewing, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, mountain biking, and fishing. The aesthetic qualities and natural features will likely draw recreational visitors to the area in the coming years. Low impact, dispersed activities which are compatible with direction provided in this management plan should have minimal effects on the natural environment. Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland will not be promoted as recreation or tourism destinations, in order to protect the natural, cultural and heritage resource values of these protected areas.

Recreational infrastructure (consisting of public services, amenities, trail-heads, established back country campsites, etc.) does not exist within the protected areas. Existing access to the Wildland on its southern border (commencing from the municipal road) is through primitive, un-maintained trails. Visitors engaged in vehicle assisted camping are encouraged to take advantage of established campgrounds at provincial recreation areas and provincial parks in the surrounding area (Chain Lakes Provincial Park and Beauvais Lake Provincial Park). Signs will inform recreational users of key messages in accordance with section 2.10 of this plan. The potential exists for conflicts between recreationists and other users, and between recreationists and livestock. Recreational activities will be monitored to assess impacts that may emerge and corrective actions will be taken where necessary.

Management Objectives

1. To allow non-motorized recreation and heritage appreciation activities.
2. To manage non-motorized recreation to minimize environmental impacts and to avoid conflicts between user groups.

Management Strategies

1. a) Given the limited number – and primitive nature – of access facilities, the lack of on-site services, and the unique and sensitive nature of the environment, the protected areas will not be actively promoted or marketed as a destination area for recreation.
   b) Recreational users in the Heritage Rangeland will need to contact the grazing leaseholder before access. For access other than foot access when no livestock are present, users need to obtain permission from the grazing disposition holder to enter the Heritage Rangeland (except when using 'access trails' that are identified in this plan).
   c) Trails for non-motorized recreation will not be formally established. Hikers are encouraged to use existing foot paths, livestock and game trails, motorized access trails, and designated OHV trails. Existing trails will not be maintained.
   d) Non-motorized recreational users will be addressed as a specific user group in the Education Plan.
   e) All special, non-commercial recreational or adventure events, if allowed, will require a permit. Permits will be issued through an approval process (as stipulated in provincial legislation).
   f) Backcountry camping is not permitted within the Heritage Rangeland but is allowed in the Wildland.
   g) No open fires are allowed in the Heritage Rangeland.

2. a) An Education Plan will identify appropriate procedures and guidelines to ensure that low impact recreational practices are observed.
   b) Monitoring will be undertaken to determine the types of activities that are occurring and to assess the impacts of non-motorized recreational activities. A methodology may be adopted or developed to assess levels of use, environmental impacts, and/or recreational carrying capacities.

2.8 Public Access and Motorized Recreational Activities

Synopsis

Public access to, and entry into, the two protected areas has historically taken place from a number of points around the boundaries. Access to and through the protected areas has been influenced by: topography, ground conditions, method of transport, and restrictions imposed by landowners and disposition holders who have controlled access.

Motorized recreational activity has historically been hunter access. More recently, the area has been sought out by off highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts. The use of newer, more powerful OHVs has led to more extensive motorized recreational use. Comparatively speaking, the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland have been subjected to considerably lower levels of OHV use than forest reserve lands further to the west.

The origin of some access trails can be attributed to early mineral exploration; other trails were subsequently established by local residents and recreational users. Trail conditions vary widely. Erosion has become a problem at a number of locations. No significant restrictions were

imposed by the provincial government to regulate motorized vehicles prior to the designation of the two protected areas in 1999. Environmental impacts caused by irresponsible users have resulted in tighter access controls by adjacent landowners and leaseholders in recent years.

Recreational motorized access within and through the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland is prohibited, except on the Bob Creek and Camp Creek 'access trails' as noted in this plan. Motorized access for the purpose of game retrieval is not permitted in the Heritage Rangeland. A designated OHV trail system has been established in the western half of the Wildland; motorized recreational access is prohibited in the eastern half of the Wildland.

Management Objectives

1. To provide reasonable, motorized public access.
2. To minimize the human footprint associated with access trails, designated OHV trails, and motorized recreational activities.
3. To provide a primitive access point, staging areas, and road/trail pull-offs for public use.
4. To restrict motorized recreation to the western half of the Wildland.
5. To provide opportunities for motorized recreation and Learning & Engagement through the establishment of a designated OHV trail system within the western half of the Wildland.
6. To exclude motorized recreation in the eastern half of the Wildland and in the Heritage Rangeland.
7. To ensure that OHV impacts on wildlife, the landscape, and water-courses are minimized through the establishment and enforcement of appropriate conditions and restrictions.
8. To undertake management activities to safeguard the environment from impacts of motorized recreation and to ensure that access trails, designated trails, access points, staging areas, and pull-offs do not suffer from deterioration, consistent with their 'primitive' status.

Management Strategies

Access Trails (see Map 3)

Motorized public access to Bob Creek Wildland will be permitted through use of the following two access trails:

- Southern access – Camp Creek access trail. Both highway and off highway vehicles are permitted on this access trail.
- Southeastern access – Bob Creek access trail. Use of this access trail is restricted to approved off highway vehicles (see definition in the Glossary for 'approved OHVs') that are permitted on designated trails within the Wildland (i.e., highway vehicles and four-wheel drives are not permitted on this access trail).

Vehicles and OHVs will need to pass through the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland to gain access to the Wildland. The *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* prohibits recreational off-highway vehicle use in Heritage Rangelands. The *Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act* was enacted to allow recreational off highway

vehicles to use the Camp Creek Trail and the Bob Creel Trail to cross the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland in order to access designated trails in the Bob Creek Wildland.

Private land

Private land must be crossed in order to get to the Camp Creek access trail from the municipal road. The landowner has granted permission for the public to use their private road to cross their land in order to access the Camp Creek trail provided that the following conditions are observed.

- Vehicles and OHVs must remain on the road (travel is not permitted on any side-trails that branch off the road)
- Only quad, snowmobile, and horse trailers are allowed on the private road. (i.e. boat and camping trailers are not allowed)
- All posted signs must be obeyed
- Vehicles must not park along or block the road.
- Users must comply with any road closure that has been put into effect by the landowner. As this is a private road, the landowner has the authority to close the road at any time for any reason, including temporary closures or restrictions in use (e.g., fire hazard, site impairment/degradation, adverse weather, site vulnerability). The landowner will generally advise the appropriate provincial agencies before a road closure is put into effect. Public notification may occur through signs and/or closed gates.
- The private road is an unimproved road and any persons using the private road to access the Camp Creek Trail do so at their own risk.
- The Camp Creek trail is not accessible by any other means from the south during periods when the private road is closed.

Public Lands Under Grazing Lease

The Camp Creek Trail and Bob Creek Trail cross public lands within the Heritage Rangeland which are under a grazing lease. These trails are specifically designated to provide for public access to or egress from the Bob Creek Wildland. Permission of the grazing leaseholder is not required to use these trails to access the Bob Creek Wildland. However, recreational users must contact the grazing leaseholder for any access to any lands outside the defined 20 metre trail right-of-way for any purpose, in accordance with the requirements of the Recreational Access Regulation under the *Public Lands Act*. The grazing leaseholder may restrict or deny access to these lands for the reasons stated in the Recreational Access Regulation. Contact and condition information can be obtained at:
www.srd.alberta.ca/AccessAgPublicLand or by telephone (toll free) at 1-866-279-0023.

Use of the Bob Creek and Camp Creek trails is subject to the following conditions:

- Vehicles and OHV's must remain on the designated trails. Travel is not permitted on any side-trails that branch off these main trails and no public motorized use is permitted off of these trails.
- No trailers are allowed on the Camp Creek trail other than quad, snowmobile or horse trailers (i.e. boat or camping trailers are not allowed).

- No highway vehicles are allowed on the Bob Creek Trail and only "approved OHV's" may be operated on this trail.
- All posted signs must be obeyed.
- Vehicles must not be parked along or block the trails at any time.

In addition to the seasonal closure of these trails (typically from the end of the elk hunting season to April 30 each year), trail access may also be temporarily closed by the Province at any time in response to high fire hazard, poor trail conditions, adverse weather conditions, wildlife concerns or other hazardous conditions. Public notice will be provided by signs and trails will generally be gated when closures are in effect.

The Camp Creek and Bob Creek access trails are unimproved trails. Maintenance of access trails on public land may be undertaken from time to time. Trail maintenance will be undertaken at the discretion of provincial agencies in consultation with the affected disposition holder.

Access Points

White Creek Access Point (see Map 4)

This access point is located along White Creek outside the Wildland's western border. The access point will be identified by signs.

This access point provides parking for vehicles that are not permitted within the Wildland. Motorized access into the Wildland is restricted to approved OHVs (see Glossary for a definition of approved OHVs). Four-wheel drives and highway vehicles are not permitted beyond this access point.

Staging Areas

Camp Creek Staging Area (see Map 3)

This staging area is located within the Wildland along its southern border, adjacent to Camp Creek. It is located at the end of the Camp Creek access trail. The staging area will be identified by signs and appropriate perimeter markers. No additional services and facilities will be made available at this staging area.

This staging area provides parking for four-wheel drives, other vehicles, and horse and OHV trailers. Motorized access into the Wildland beyond this point is restricted to approved OHVs. Back county camping is not permitted in this staging area or within one Km of the staging area.

The previously existing random camping area along Camp Creek within the Heritage Rangeland (Section 35, Twp. 10, Range 3, West of the 5th meridian), is no longer available for motorized camping and will be reclaimed. The traditional random camping area to the north of the Camp Creek Staging Area (within the Wildland) is also closed to motorized camping and will be reclaimed.

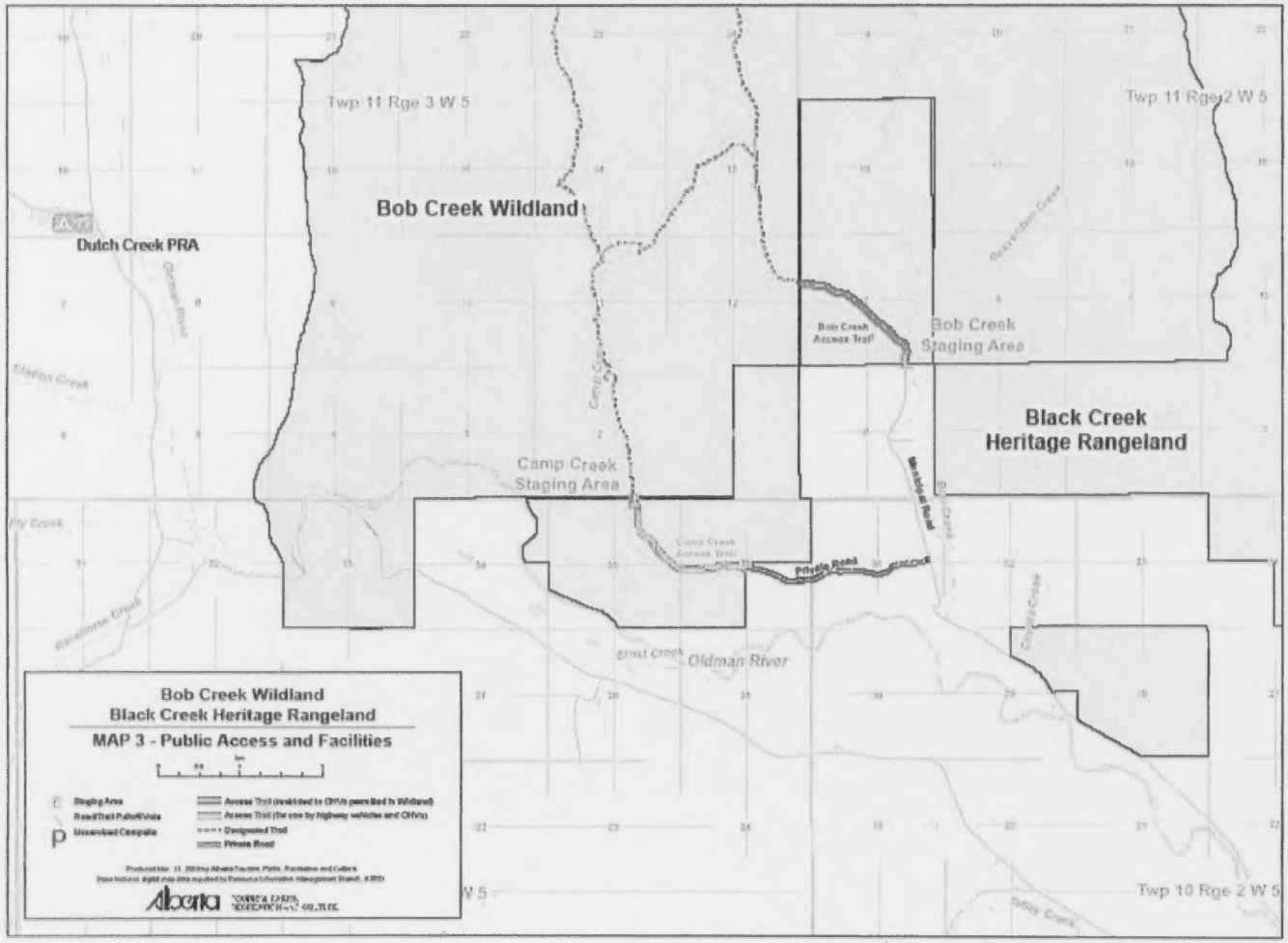
Bob Creek Staging Area (see Map 3)

A staging area is located along Bob Creek at the end of the municipal road. This staging area is identified by signs. No additional services and facilities will be made available at this staging area.

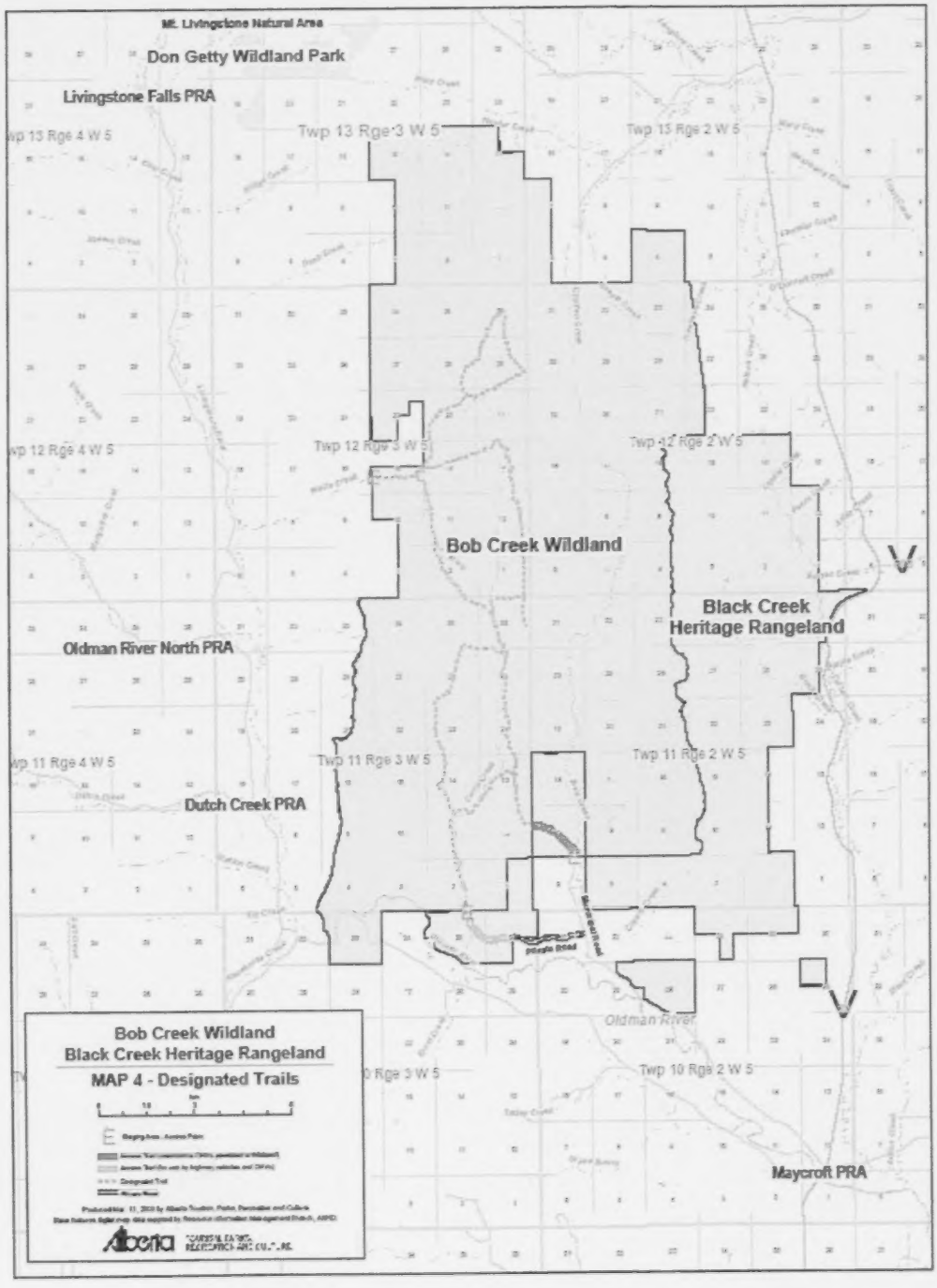
This staging area provides parking for four-wheel drives, highway vehicles, and horse and OHV trailers. Only approved OHVs that are permitted within the Wildland may continue along the Bob Creek access trail beyond the staging area. Camping is not permitted within the Bob Creek staging area.

The Bob Creek staging area is the preferred access point for the majority of visitors seeking access to the Heritage Rangeland and Wildland. Interpretive displays and educational materials may be made available at the Bob Creek staging area.

Map 3


Twp 11 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 11 Rge 2 W 5
Bob Creek Wildland
Dutch Creek PRA
Bob Creek Staging Area
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland
Camp Creek Staging Area
Oldman River
Twp 10 Rge 2 W 5
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland
MAP 3 - Public Access and Facilities

Map 4


Mt. Livingstone Natural Area
Don Getty Wildland Park
Livingstone Falls PRA
Twp 13 Rge 4 W 5
Twp 13 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 13 Rge 2 W 5
Twp 12 Rge 4 W 5
Twp 12 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 12 Rge 2 W 5
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek
Heritage Rangeland
Oldman River North PRA
Twp 11 Rge 4 W 5
Twp 11 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 11 Rge 2 W 5
Dutch Creek PRA
Oldman River
Twp 10 Rge 3 W 5
Twp 10 Rge 2 W 5
Maycroft PRA
Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland
MAP 4 - Designated Trails

Designated Trails (see Map 4)

OHV Restrictions

Although the *Traffic Safety Act* provides a broad definition for off highway vehicles, in the interest of environmental protection, the size and weight of OHVs and snowmobiles that are allowed on the Bob Creek Trail and on the designated trails in Bob Creek Wildland will be restricted.

For the purposes of this plan an 'approved OHV' includes the following:

A snowmobile (i.e., a motorized toboggan designed for travel on snow) which:

- has a dry weight of 340 kilograms (748 pounds)or less
- has an overall width of 1.22 meters (48 inches) or less
- is steered by changing the horizontal alignment of one or two front skis rather than adjusting brake or clutch pressure to one or more tracks; OR

A vehicle used for cross-country travel on land, snow, ice, or other natural terrain and which:

- has a dry weight of 386 kilograms (849 pounds) or less
- has a tire pressure of 70 kilopascals (10 pounds per square inch) or less
- has no less than three and no more than four tires
- has no tracks
- has a wheel base of 1.55 meters (61 inches) or less
- has a width of 1.22 meters (48 inches) or less
- is steered by changing the horizontal alignment of the front wheels rather than adjusting brake or clutch pressure to one or more wheels.

OHV's must be insured and registered as an off-highway vehicle under the *Traffic Safety Act* and must comply with the regulations under the Act. All other motorized vehicles (e.g., four-wheel drive vehicles and motor bikes) are not permitted.

Approved OHVs are permitted within the Wildland under the following conditions:

1. OHVs must be confined to (kept on) designated trails (see Map 4) at all times except when passing, turning or parking an OHV immediately adjacent to the designated trail. Departures or excursions from designated trails are not permitted. OHVs can, however, be used to access a campsite within 100 meters of a designated trail within the Wildland.
2. Organized OHV events or rallies will not be permitted in the Wildland.
3. Designated trails will be closed to OHVs from the end of the elk hunting season to April 30 to minimize stress on wildlife and to ensure that elk are not displaced from their winter range.
4. OHV operators must minimize impacts to water quality and riparian zones at creek crossings.

The following management actions will be undertaken with respect to designated trails in the Wildland:

1. trail assessments
2. trail maintenance, restoration, and development of creek crossings
3. installation of signs and trail identification markers
4. closing and/or relocation of trail segments (due to trail deterioration, fire hazard, public safety issues, high erosion potential, maintenance work, other resource management considerations)
5. assessment of user compliance with OHV requirements and restrictions
6. enforcement
7. periodic review of "approved OHV" specifications when the management plan is reviewed

Non-designated Trails

Existing discontinued (unused) OHV trails that are not part of the designated trail system in the Wildland will be inspected to determine if they should be reclaimed. Likewise, discontinued OHV trails in the Heritage Rangeland that are in need of reclamation will be identified. Any reclamation work will be undertaken in accordance with a plan developed in consultation with stakeholders. The reclamation plan will recognize the value of retaining some traditional use trails for resource management purposes, trapping, and other permitted uses.

Visitor Facilities

Serviced campsites and visitor facilities will not be developed within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland. Visitors are encouraged to make use of established campgrounds found in the vicinity including:

- Maycroft Provincial Recreation Area
- Chain Lakes Provincial Park, Beauvais Lake Provincial Park
- Provincial Recreation Areas along the Forestry Trunk Road (i.e., Racehorse, Dutch Creek, Oldman River North, Livingstone Falls)

Pull-offs (see Map 3)

Three pull-offs will be established to allow visitors to park their vehicles off roads and trails. Pull-offs are intended to provide access for viewing scenery, and other compatible day use activities. Recreational users must contact the grazing leaseholder prior to accessing any lands under grazing lease from any pull-offs as per the Recreational Access Regulation. No overnight camping is permitted at these pull-offs. Pull-offs will be established at the following locations for a limited number of vehicles:

- along the Local Road in the Livingstone Gap (two locations)
- along the Camp Creek access trail within the Heritage Rangeland

Pull-offs will be identified by signs and appropriate perimeter markers. Interpretive displays and educational materials could be made available at pull-offs.

2.9 Motorized Access for Resource Management Purposes

Synopsis

As is noted in Section 2.8, recreational OHV use is confined to designated trails in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland. These designated trails are also available for use by disposition holders, government staff, consultants, and contractors who are engaged in resource management activities. On occasion, the need will arise for motorized travel to areas not served by a designated trail. In these instances – where the designated trail system is insufficient to accommodate motorized travel for resource management purposes – allowance will be made for off-trail use. Should this occur, good stewardship practices must be observed to minimize the impacts associated with vehicle and machine use.

Management Objective

1. To allow approved highway vehicles, OHVs, and equipment to be used for resource management purposes.

Management Strategies

1. Motorized access by government staff (including consultants and contractors) will be allowed for resource management purposes (e.g., back country patrols, compliance checks, range audits, range improvement projects, wildlife management, resource inventory work, maintenance and reclamation of trails, etc.) and for scientific research purposes.
2. Motorized access will be granted to grazing disposition holders to manage livestock and carry out range management and improvement projects.
3. Motorized access will be granted to registered trappers to carry out trap line activities.
4. Motorized access to existing rights-of-way is available for the maintenance of power lines and rights-of-way.
5. Care and discretion must be exercised when operating motorized vehicles and equipment to minimize environmental impacts. Sensitive areas and trails that will be (or have been) reclaimed should be avoided. Authorized users should limit motorized travel to agreed to trails and corridors as determined through consultations with disposition holders and provincial agencies. Consideration should be given to the use of horses, foot travel, and helicopters as alternate modes of transportation wherever practical and feasible.

2.10 Signs and Visitor Information

Synopsis

Signs are essential for conveying important information and in protecting the natural environment from unacceptable human actions. Signs include: location and direction signs;

information signs; designated OHV trail signs; interpretive/educational signs; instruction signs; warning/hazard signs; and boundary signs. Key messages conveyed through signs will identify behavioral requirements and expectations for users of the two protected areas. A comprehensive sign plan will be prepared consistent with the standards used for protected areas across the province.

Management Objectives

1. To develop and provide effective signs for the benefit of users.
2. To ensure that all signs contribute to the achievement of management objectives and strategies that are contained in this plan.

Management Strategies

1. a) Provincial agencies will develop and implement a comprehensive sign plan in consultation with the Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee.
   b) Sign attributes (i.e., colour, size, and appearance) will comply with provincial sign standards for protected areas.
   c) Direction, information, regulatory and educational signs will be strategically placed to convey essential information.

2. a) Signs will be developed, installed, and maintained by Parks staff.
   b) Signs will not be used to promote access to the protected areas. Signs or advertising pertaining to the protected areas will not be placed along Highway 22.
   c) BP Amoco and the Nature Conservancy will be recognized for their contribution in the establishment of the Bob Creek Wildland.
   d) Key messages that will be incorporated in educational and interpretive signs will be identified in an Education Plan.
   e) Interpretive displays and educational materials may be made available at staging areas.

2.11 Public Education and Awareness

Synopsis

As a result of raised public awareness and media exposure, increased visitation is anticipated. Traditional users and newcomers will need to be educated about the status and location of the protected areas and the conditions and restrictions that need to be observed.

Natural and cultural history will be interpreted in a manner that instils appreciation for the area and enlists support for protection. Interpretive programs will be assessed to determine their effectiveness. Research will confirm specific types of users that visit the protected areas; identify specific education needs; confirm resource management issues that are important to different types of users, and; verify which media are most effective in communicating information to different types of users and to the general public. Key messages, target user groups, delivery mechanisms, and a de-marketing strategy will be identified in an Education Plan. This plan will be developed by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation in consultation with various stakeholders.

Management Objectives

1. To communicate key messages to user groups and potential visitors who are on-site or who are planning to visit the protected areas.
2. To develop education programs that are based on natural heritage and the ranching culture of the region, and which assist in preserving the landscape and resource values.
3. To ensure that public education and awareness programs do not give high exposure to the protected areas.

Management Strategies

1. a) A baseline audience profile will be developed that identifies specific audience groups and their educational needs.
   b) An education plan will be developed in consultation with the Bob Creek/Black Creek Advisory Committee, based on direction contained in this management plan. The education plan will include strategies for creating and disseminating information to potential visitors and user groups in response to the baseline audience profile. The education plan will contain a de-marketing strategy for the protected areas (de-marketing encourages the use of other areas that can withstand additional visitation levels, e.g., inform visitors of local hiking opportunities at Beauvais Lake and Chain Lakes Provincial Parks). Off-site interpretive programs will occur at Beauvais Lake Provincial Park and Chain Lakes Provincial Park to provide Learning & Engagement and education opportunities for visitors. Education and awareness strategies will be tailored to the specific users of the protected areas and will not encourage marketing or promotion of the protected areas to the public at large.
   c) Education materials and programs will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. The success of education programs will be assessed to ensure that desirable outcomes are being achieved.
2. See strategies #1a, 1b, and 1c above.
3. a) Given the limited number – and primitive nature – of access facilities, the lack of on-site services, and the unique and sensitive nature of the environment, public education and awareness initiatives will not promote the protected areas with the aim of attracting increased levels of visitor use.
   b) The protected areas will be referred to as the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland in government communications. The two protected areas will not be referred to as the 'Whaleback' in public education materials.

2.12 Research Activities

Synopsis

Protected areas like Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland provide excellent opportunities for scientific research on: natural systems, specific species, human impacts to the environment, the effectiveness of new and current management practices, etc. Given the relatively pristine character of the protected areas, and the fact that they represent an outstanding example of the Montane Natural Sub-region, they are of particular interest to researchers. Research is considered to be a complimentary activity in both protected areas. The information

and data obtained through research projects is valuable, not only in better managing both protected areas, but in furthering our understanding of ecosystems.

Management Objective

1. To allow research that advances scientific knowledge and contributes to the effective management of the protected areas.

Management Strategies

1. a) Research projects that will directly benefit the management of the protected areas will be given priority. Other research projects will be assessed on the merits of each proposal and other relevant factors.
   b) Wildlife, fisheries, vegetation, range and other ecological inventories and research projects that are carried out by government agencies (or government consultants/agents) must comply with government policies.
   c) Research applications will be referred to appropriate provincial government agencies.
   d) Research projects should be compatible with protecting natural and cultural heritage resource values and be completed in accordance with applicable legislation and policies.

2.13 Historical Resources

Synopsis

Although no paleontological resources have been found within the protected areas, fossils have been collected from adjacent areas. Fossil finds must be reported to the Royal Tyrrell Museum. Excavation permits, issued only to qualified researchers, are required before commencing with fossil recovery.

Largely as a result of oil/gas exploration activity, 19 archaeological and historical sites have been discovered in the protected areas. Of these known sites, 17 exist in the Wildland and two exist in the Heritage Rangeland. The historic sites include a building foundation, lime kiln, lookout, and corral and fence. 'Pre-contact' sites consist of a cairn, burial site, stone circles, and campsites. Given the high potential for finding and recovering additional archaeological and historic resources, the Historic Resources Management Branch should be notified before commencing with any ground disturbance.

3.0 Plan Administration and Implementation

3.1 Plan Implementation

This management plan represents the direction for managing Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. Plan implementation will occur through the efforts of participating government agencies and non-government stakeholders.

A Work Plan will be developed by participating provincial agencies on an annual basis to ensure that an integrated and focused approach is being adopted for implementing the management plan. The Work Plan will, among other things, address:

- accomplishments during the previous year
- priorities for the coming year
- existing (and emerging) issues and appropriate management interventions
- monitoring activities that are underway and identifying monitoring activities which will be adopted in the future

Input will be sought from the Bob Creek/Black Creek Advisory Committee during the development of the Work Plan.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Provincial Agencies

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has been developed (see Appendix 2). This agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of both departments in managing the two protected areas.

3.3 Bob Creek/Black Creek Advisory Committee

A Bob Creek/Black Creek Advisory Committee will be maintained to provide advice to appropriate field managers on the management of the two protected areas. The advisory committee will be comprised of seven members representing:

- Municipal District of Ranchland (1 member)
- Public at large (3 local members to be appointed by the MD of Ranchland, ensuring that a balance of interests is maintained)
- Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation (1 member)
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (2 members: 1 member representing Lands Division and 1 member representing Fish and Wildlife Division)

The chair of the Advisory Committee will be selected by the members. The Advisory Committee will develop a Terms of Reference that will be approved by appropriate field

managers of Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

The roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee are generally as follows:

- remain informed of progress being made in the implementation of this management plan
- assess the ongoing relevance of provisions in the management plan in light of new information, monitoring programs, emerging issues, new technologies, new management practices, etc.
- advise on whether of not the intent of the management plan is being fulfilled
- advise on public input on the two protected areas
- make advisory recommendations in response to issues, trends, changing use levels, site specific problems, etc.
- identify management actions that have been successful and those which are in need of further attention
- assess the overall effectiveness of the management plan

3.4 Plan Assessments and Amendments

This plan will be kept current. In accordance with the principle of adaptive management, direction contained in the management plan will be assessed on a continual basis. Where necessary, the plan will be modified to ensure that the overall management intent for the protected areas is being achieved. Plan amendments will be instituted when assessments reveal that provisions in the plan are not achieving desired results or outcomes.

The Bob Creek/Black Creek Advisory Committee will participate in formal plan assessments at approximately 5-year intervals to determine whether a management plan review is required.

Appendix 1

Permitted Activities: Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland

ACTIVITY	Bob Creek Wildland	Black Creek Heritage Rangeland ♦
Recreational Uses and Facilities		
1. foot access (hiking, backpacking, wildlife viewing)	Yes	Yes
2. recreational hunting	Yes	Yes
3. recreational fishing	Yes	Yes
4. horse riding	Yes	Yes
5. mountain biking	Yes - on designated trails	No**
6. cross country skiing / snow shoeing	Yes	Yes
7. backcountry (primitive) camping	Yes	No
8. approved off-highway vehicles - quads (see Glossary for definition of approved OHVs)	Yes - on designated trails (Map 4) *	No**
9. approved off-highway vehicles - snowmobiles	Yes - on designated trails (Map 4) *	No**
10. highway vehicles - 4x4 trucks	No	No**
11. auto access staging area	Camp Creek (Map 3)	Bob Creek (Map 3)
12. auto access, serviced campgrounds	No	No
13. auto-assisted random camping	No	No
14. guiding / outfitting / commercial recreation ventures	Yes***	Yes***
15. recreational (tourism) facilities and services	No	No
Non-Recreational Uses and Facilities		
1. trapping	Yes	Yes
2. domestic livestock grazing	Yes	Yes
3. cultivation	No	No
4. commercial logging	No	No
5. new power transmission lines	No	No
6. Crown resources: oil / gas exploration and development	No	No
7. Freehold mineral exploration and development	Yes	Yes
8. development of surface materials / minerals	No	No
9. new pipelines	Only for recovery of Freehold oil / gas	Only for recovery of Freehold oil / gas
10. telecommunication towers	No	No
11. new roads	No	No
12. windmills/windfarms	No	No
13. motorized access for resource management purposes (e.g., trapping, grazing)	Yes	Yes
14. scientific research	Yes	Yes

♦ users are required to contact the grazing lease holder before entering lease land

* seasonal restrictions apply: designated trails will be closed to OHVs from the end of the elk hunting season to April 30th

** motorized access and cycle access is permitted through the Heritage Rangeland on two designated 'access trails' (see management plan for details – Map 3)

***requires approval and appropriate licences/permits

Appendix 2

Memorandum of Understanding:
Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Government of Alberta is committed to preserving in perpetuity landscapes, natural features and ecological processes representative of the environmental diversity of the province. Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland have been established as protected areas to preserve and protect these ecologically significant areas. The ongoing protection and management of these protected areas is achieved through the continuation of the historical grazing that has been integral to the management of these lands.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THIS MOU

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provides a framework that clarifies and formalizes management roles, responsibilities and processes associated with the shared stewardship of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.

The MOU provides a basis for a positive and cooperative working arrangement between Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation (TPR). Statements within this MOU must be taken into context with the whole document and with the management plan and not read in isolation.

SRD and TPR agree to:

1. ***Share responsibility for stewardship of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland; and***

2. ***Manage Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland consistent with the legislation, policies, management plan and program direction.***

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 PROGRAM AND POLICY DIRECTION

- TPR is responsible for establishing Heritage Rangelands under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Heritage Rangelands and Natural Areas Act* and Wildlands under the *Provincial Parks Act*.
- TPR will continue to develop and coordinate program and policy direction and standards for Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland in cooperation with SRD.
- SRD will continue to develop and coordinate program and policy direction and standards for management of grazing and other dispositions under the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act* for Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland and in cooperation with TPR.
- SRD and TPR share responsibility for ensuring that the two protected areas are managed in accordance with legislation, program, management plan and policy direction and standards applicable to Heritage Rangelands and Wildlands
- In the absence of clear direction from the management plan or from this Memorandum of Understanding, SRD will be the primary contact and will refer the issue as appropriate.

3.2 DISPOSITION AND RANGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- SRD is the primary contact and is responsible for the day-to-day operations, management and monitoring of dispositions and other approvals under the *Public Lands Act* on Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and implementation of the relevant legislation, policies and program direction. This includes issuing, administering, renewing and being responsible for all *Public Lands Act* dispositions, including grazing leases, located within Black Creek Heritage Rangeland.
- SRD is the primary contact and will manage and monitor grazing in Bob Creek Wildland under the *Forest Reserves Act*. This includes issuing, administering, renewing and being responsible for all *Forest Reserves Act* grazing permits on all forest reserve land located within Bob Creek Wildland and implementation of the relevant legislation, policies and program direction.
- SRD will work with grazing disposition holders to implement sound range management practices and to recognize and/or improve stewardship where required.
- SRD will assess ongoing range health and review overall management on grazing dispositions.

3.3 Fish and Wildlife Management

- Resource allocations for fishing, hunting, trapping, and guiding/outfitting, where these activities are permitted, will be the responsibility of SRD in consultation with TPR.
- Problem wildlife in the protected areas will be managed by SRD in consultation with TPR.

3.4 Forest Protection

- SRD will be responsible for forest protection in consultation with TPR.
- SRD will be responsible for initial attack and wildfire suppression.

3.5 Forest Health (Insects and Disease)

- Forest health programs will be the responsibility of SRD in consultation with TPR.

3.6 Recreation Management

- Outdoor recreation management within the protected areas will be the responsibility of TPR in consultation with SRD.

3.7 Planning

- TPR is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland Management Plan, in cooperation with SRD.
- TPR is responsible for coordinating public involvement related to the development, maintenance or updating of the Management Plan for Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.
- SRD is responsible for development of range management plans and other operational plans for range resource management in accordance with the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland Management Plan. Plans involving range improvements and/or vegetation management will be referred to TPR for input through the range management planning process.
- All other operational management plans will be developed using a consultative approach between SRD and TPR.

3.8 Conflicts and Appeals

- SRD will facilitate resolution of disposition and approval holder conflicts for activities pursuant to the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act*.
- SRD will coordinate appeals (e.g., compliance, conditions on dispositions, rejection of applications) by disposition holders and applicants under the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act*.
- SRD will coordinate dispute resolution relating to recreational access to lands under grazing lease.

3.9 Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement

- TPR is responsible for compliance assurance and monitoring and for taking enforcement action where appropriate in Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland for infractions related to the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act*, *Historical Resources Act*, the *Provincial Parks Act* and other Provincial Statutes as required.
- SRD is responsible for compliance assurance and monitoring and for taking action where appropriate for infractions pursuant to the *Public Lands Act, Forest Reserves Act, Wildlife Act, Fisheries (Alberta) Act, Fisheries Act (Canada), Migratory Birds Convention Act, Fresh Water Marketing Act, Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* and other Provincial Statutes as required.
- Where appropriate, SRD and TPR will work together in managing, monitoring and ensuring compliance of their respective legislation within the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.

3.10 Budget responsibility

- SRD and TPR will coordinate budgets to address specific management requirements on an as needed basis.
- SRD is responsible for budgeting relative to the day-to-day operational requirements and management and monitoring of dispositions and other approvals under relevant statutes such as the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act* subject to the requirement to coordinate budget to address specific management issues.
- TPR is responsible for budgeting relative to the Parks and Protected Areas Program responsibilities (e.g., recreation, trails, staging areas, sanitary facilities, signs, brochures and maps).
- SRD is responsible for budgeting related to forest protection (fire) operations and all responsibilities under the *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*.

3.11 Research and Monitoring

- SRD and TPR will act in partnership to coordinate planning and implementation for research and monitoring.

4.0 MOU MANAGEMENT

4.1 Program Management and Coordination Committee

- SRD and TPR will establish and maintain a senior-level regional management committee to coordinate the management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.

4.2 MOU Interpretation and Application

- SRD and TPR staff with responsibilities under this MOU will work cooperatively and use their best efforts to resolve any matters relating to any differences of opinion regarding the interpretation or application of the MOU. If staff cannot resolve any difference of interpretation of this MOU or any other matter related to this MOU to their mutual satisfaction and agreement, then they shall submit the matter through their head office for decision. If the matter cannot be effectively resolved then the Deputy Ministers of SRD and TPR will, following review, make a final and binding decision.

4.3 Review of this MOU

- SRD and TPR agree to manage Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland within the scope and understanding of this MOU and will ensure that this MOU remains up-to-date. Should any additions or changes be required to this MOU for any reason, the Management Committee will make specific recommendations through their head office for decision.
- Grazing leaseholders and Forest Reserve grazing permit holders will be consulted before any changes are made to this MOU.

Glossary

Access Trail

Is an un-maintained trail that has been established for the purpose of providing public access to the Bob Creek Wildland. The management plan specifies the types of vehicles, trailers, and OHVs that are permitted on access trails.

Animal Unit Equivalent

Accounts for variations that exist in the proportions of an animal unit due to age, weight, and type of livestock (e.g., a cow weighing approximately 1200 lbs. equals 1.15 Animal Unit Equivalents – based on metabolic weight).

Animal Unit Month (AUM)

Measure of forage required to maintain one animal unit (defined as a mature cow of 1000 lbs. [455 kg] with or without a calf) for one month.

Approved Off Highway Vehicle (OHV)

For the purposes of this plan an 'approved OHV' includes the following:

A snowmobile (i.e., a motorized toboggan designed for travel on snow) which:

- has a dry weight of 340 kilograms (748 pounds) or less
- has an overall width of 1.22 meters (48 inches) or less
- is steered by changing the horizontal alignment of one or two front skis rather than adjusting brake or clutch pressure to one or more tracks; OR

A vehicle used for cross country travel on land, snow, ice, or other natural terrain and which:

- has a dry weight of 386 kilograms (849 pounds) or less
- has a tire pressure of 70 kilopascals (10 pounds per square inch) or less
- has no less than three and no more than four tires
- has no tracks
- has a wheel base of 1.55 meters (61 inches) or less
- has a width of 1.22 meters (48 inches) or less
- is steered by changing the horizontal alignment of the front wheels rather than adjusting brake or clutch pressure to one or more wheels.

Backcountry Camping

Backcountry camping is 'primitive' camping, which will tend to be dispersed throughout the Wildland. For the purposes of this management plan, backcountry camping refers to camping in Bob Creek Wildland (within 100 meters of designated trails) where an approved OHV has been used to access the area or camping occurring at locations in Bob Creek that have not been specifically established for camping purposes where access is by foot or horseback.

Biodiversity

"The variety, distribution, and abundance of different plants, animals, and micro-organisms, the ecological functions and processes they perform, and the genetic diversity they contain at local, regional or landscape levels of analysis." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Coarse-Filter Management

"Conservation of land areas and representative habitats with the assumption that the needs of all associated species, communities, environments and ecological processes will be met." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Designated Trail

Is an un-maintained, primitive trail that has been established for OHV use in the western half of the Bob Creek Wildland. All trails that are part of the designated trail system have been identified through signs and trail markers. Approved OHVs that are permitted on designated trails are specified in this plan.

Education Plan

Is an overall strategy that identifies key messages that will be delivered to different user groups in the two protected areas. The strategy will propose various approaches for raising user/visitor awareness of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland and identify different mechanisms for effectively targeting messages to their intended audiences.

Environmentally Significant Area

Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) are reconnaissance level inventories that identify Alberta's significant, rare, sensitive and unique natural features and important ecosystems (or ecosystem segments). ESA inventories indicate whether natural features and ecosystems are either regionally, provincially, nationally, or internationally significant.

Exotic Species

Are non-native (non-indigenous) plant and animal species. While some exotic species are deliberately introduced, other exotic species have surfaced in an area by various accidental or unintentional means. Exotic species can have undesirable effects on native species and affect the integrity of natural ecosystems.

Fine-Filter Management

"Specific management for a single or a few species rather than broad management for a habitat or ecosystem." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Keystone Species

"Species that are dominant in function and possibly (but not necessarily) in structure within any one ecosystem. They hold a crucial role in supporting the integrity of the entire ecosystem, and therefore affect the survival and abundance of many other species in the same ecosystem." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Livestock

For the purposes of this plan, livestock refers to cattle, horses or sheep.

Open Fire

Any fire that is dependent on combustible materials other than liquid fuels or propane.

Random Camping

Overnight camping which is dependent on – or is directly assisted by – a highway vehicle and which occurs in areas that have not been designated as campgrounds or campsites.

Silviculture

"The art, science, and practice of controlling the establishment, composition, health, quality, and growth of the vegetation of forest stands." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

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